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ASIA FOR THE ASIATICS

By Alexander Boeker

Large-scale warfare between French and Annamite troops in Indo-China, though immediately affecting some 24,000,000 colonial people, is fundamentally only an incident in the developing struggle of one billion Asiatics to be free of foreign control.

The struggle of the Viet Nam forces now raging to the north of the 16th parallel -- once the dividing line between the commands of Generals Wedemeyer and Mountbatten, and hence between Chinese and British occupation -- is the direct sequel to fighting last winter south of that line, where French rule could more easily reassert itself.

The French, seeing their Empire on the way to dissolution, charge that the Viet Namese attack on December 19 was an act of duplicity. With more juridical finesse than political good sense, they say that they cannot negotiate until "order has been restored."

The Viet Namese also claim that they have been double-crossed. On March 6, 1946, when Chinese troops still occupied the northern half of Indo-China, the French agreed to a grant of "independence" within the framework of an Indo-Chinese Federation, closely linked to France. The Republic of Viet Nam was to include the States of Tongking and Annam, with a combined population of 15,000,000 Annamites, the most energetic of the several Indo-Chinese races. A referendum was promised the 5,000,000 Annamites in Cochin-China, the southern end of Indo-China.

The French, however, went back on this promise. Trying to hold on to the southernmost part of Indo-China in much the same way that Britain is keeping Singapore outside the Malayan Union, they proclaimed Cochin-China an autonomous republic on June 1, and installed a puppet government. Moreover, they refused to recognize Viet Nam authority in southern Annam, south of the 16th parallel, an area including the strategically important Camranh Bay. If duplicity is the issue in Indo-China, it was not all confined to the Viet Namese.

The situation is not made more savory by the apparently justified French accusation that some Japanese have been fighting with the Annamites and the reports of American observers that the French are using

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German prisoners of war, recruited into the Foreign Legion.

II

Communist infiltration in the nationalist movement of Indo-China further complicates the picture, the more so since Communism in every part of the world has become a vehicle of Russian foreign policy.

The President of the Viet Nam Republic, Ho Chi-Minh, is both an Annamite nationalist and a disciple of the Comintern. Though at present professing no program of social revolution and though enjoying the support of the wealthy as well as the poor among his compatriots, Ho's record leaves no doubt as to his ideological affiliation. After studying revolutionary tactics at Moscow he worked for the Soviet Consulate in Canton and for General Borodin, once the Kremlin's adviser to the Chinese Nationalists.

While direct Soviet aid and influence are not in evidence, relations between Viet Nam and the Kremlin bear the closest watching. Moscow's agents, now known to be at work in India, China, Japan, Indonesia, Burma and the Philippines, could scarcely overlook the golden opportunities arising from colonial warfare in Indo-China.

With suspicious unanimity the Communist parties of all Asiatic countries have once again jumped on the bandwagon of nationalism. The notable exception is in areas contiguous to Russia, such as China and Iran, where Soviet objectives can best be furthered by the disintegration of national unity. Similarly, in the Assembly of the United Nations the Soviet delegates and their puppets pose before the klieg lights of "world opinion" as staunch defenders of national rights, apparently oblivious to the fact that in the Baltic countries and elsewhere their masters are pursuing a policy of national extermination.

Americans would make a grave mistake, however, if they identified the national aspirations of colonial peoples too closely with revolutionary intrigues of the Kremlin. Nationalism in Asia is not the product of Communist agitation, but the result of historic forces greater than, and anterior to, Communism. The idea of political freedom cannot be stopped short at Suez. The rise of a Western-educated class among the natives, and the growing economic development of colonial areas, combine to act as a direct stimulant to the advance of national consciousness. Colonial misrule has added fuel to the flames.

Communism is trying to capture the nationalist movements all over Southern Asia, but it will succeed only to the extent that an enlightened democratic solution fails. In Asia, as in Europe or America, the best way to combat Communism is not to denounce Communists, but to remedy the conditions in which Communist agitation thrives. If the

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nationalist movements of Asia are repressed, their capture by Communist agents will be a certainty.

III

The fast growing sense of solidarity among Asia's different nationalities may well prove more important in the long run than Communist intrigue. This solidarity was expressed by Pandit Nehru on January 7, when he stated that Indian good will toward France had been "put under severe strain" because of hostilities against Viet Nam.

There were striking manifestations of Asiatic solidarity at the recent sessions of the United Nations Assembly. Discussions about atomic control, disarmament and Franco Spain stole the headlines. But the official record shows the extent to which problems of interracial relations actually occupied the delegates.

Debates on the setting up of the Trusteeship Council, on the treatment of Indians in South Africa, and on the calling of regional conferences of dependent territories, helped to demonstrate the instinctive unanimity of the non-European races whenever questions of race or color are broached. On all these issues the delegates from Asia, including the Arab bloc, voted in unison, supported by Ethiopia, Liberia and Haiti, and always championed by the Soviet claque.

The admission of Siam as a new Member of the United Nations touched off a great demonstration for Asiatic nationalism. Mr. Wellington Koo, for China, welcomed Siam as "a sister nation in Asia."

Mrs. Pandit, able Indian delegate and the sister of Nehru, voiced more than Indian opinion when she said, on November 26:

> "The issue, in my opinion, is whether Western civilization is to be based on the theory of racial supremacy or whether the barriers imposed between man and man on grounds of color are to be broken down and justice and equality are to be considered the due of all."

The revolutionary effect of American policy in the Philippines was clearly demonstrated by a speech of Carlos Romulo on the same day:

> "We are asking for the non-selfgoverning peoples today exactly the same opportunity for self-expression that we Filipinos enjoyed for forty years in our relations with the United States of America. We are proceeding on the assumption that what was done in our country can and should be done elsewhere, for the sake of the peace, progress and security of the world, and with similar beneficial results. We have seen enough violence in our time to make us hope that the method of conciliation and agreement might replace the method of revolt and revolution in advancing the cause of non-selfgoverning peoples."

The United States cannot afford to be lined up against this rising tide of Asiatic nationalism.

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European stakes in the Asiatic upheaval are very great. Holland used to derive a major portion of its revenue from the Netherlands Indies, now rapidly moving toward nationhood. Dollar exchange derived from the sale of Malayan tin and rubber to the American automobile industry used to account for the better part of Britain's purchases in this country. It is said that the income derived by the French people from colonial Indo-China was at least equal to that derived from all other French colonies combined.

Political and strategic stakes are even greater. Without their Asiatic colonies, Holland and France would find their weight in world affairs greatly diminished. Britain's role as a world power is tied up with its controlling position in India and Southeast Asia. Moreover, the "loss of face" suffered by all colonial powers during the period of Japanese successes has not been fully recovered. If Europe is now forced by native revolts to retreat from its former colonies, the "white man's" prestige, for what it is worth, will be permanently lowered.

Yet, as Dunkirk showed, retreat can be turned into moral victory, if carried out with farsightedness and greatness of mind. Cynics in this country like to assert that it was only the influence of the sugar interests in Congress which brought about Philippine independence. Millions of Asiatics, however, look upon this action by the United States as a noble gesture by a great people. By setting the Philippines free, America gained more in prestige and influence than it lost.

It is Britain's good fortune at this critical period to have a Labor Government which, whatever the merits of domestic policy, shows a farsighted and realistic attitude toward colonial problems. When Burma and Malaya were reconquered from the Japanese, the local independence movements were largely infiltrated by Communists. By offering a very generous measure of independence, Britain strengthened the hands of democratic elements among the nationalists. In Ceylon, the first tropical colony to receive representative government, there has been virtually no unrest and little, if any, Communist infiltration. It is tragic indeed that France has not yet learned to manage its colonial affairs with the realism displayed by the British.

America, of course, has a vital interest in a solution, in Viet Nam and other colonial areas, which will insure that Asia shall belong to the Asiatics -- and not to Moscow.

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Not Merely Gossip *A Supplement to* Human Events VOL. IV, NO. 3

By Frank C. Hanighen January 15, 1947

The picture, as currently presented, of patient legislators toiling to "outlaw strikes," "restrain labor extremists," "enact firm but not punitive laws" -- all serves to conceal a much less pacific and high-minded activity of which many observers are always conscious, but which they rarely mention. Behind the -- so far -- courteous arguments between the "get tough" and "firm but moderate" schools on the question of labor laws, serious preparations are being made for a very earnest conflict, the stakes of which are the Presidency in 1948. In short, the divisions of Dewey and the panzers of Taft are maneuvering for position.

The Taft "middle-of-the-road" strategy is obvious. But no observers have publicly noticed what Dewey is up to on Capitol Hill. The field marshals of the Taft army have now studied and evaluated what seems to be a formidable tandem formation in the following order: Chairman Hartley of the House Labor Committee out in front; behind him Majority Leader Halleck, Dewey's man; and then the final staff headquarters and G-2 in Albany.

Halleck -- say those who are in a position to know -- is writing the House Labor bill for Hartley. Since the character of the one well defined Senate bill, sponsored by Taft, is all too visible, it is expected that Halleck, not without consultation with the New York Governor, has been able to set his sights. The Dewey leader's composition which Hartley will ere long propose, will -- it is expected -- be more drastic than that of Senator Taft. The Dewey team, in short, will attempt to whipsaw Taft, and their calculations, it is believed, run as follows: By making the House bill "tougher," the anticipated result would be to make Taft alter his cherished "moderate" position. If he resists the pull to the Right, then he would lose conservative support; if on the other hand he modifies his labor role, then he stands to lose the aura of "liberalism."

Meanwhile, to the naked -- and public -- eye, Dewey will have no visible connection with these unedifying proceedings. He can remain wrapped in dignified silence, busy with the chores of the Empire State, untainted by the sordid doings in the nation's capital, friend of employer and employee alike. Or so the Dewey planners think. But they have yet to reckon with Taft, who is no mean antagonist in the political arena. Connoisseurs of such contests await with interest to see how the Senator from Ohio will handle the Dewey strategy.

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What will be Marshall's policy as Secretary of State? It is generally agreed that he will put an end to the Braden policy -- he'll support the wishes of the General Staff on that matter. Expert opinion seems to be fairly confident that he will continue to follow the Byrnes policy in Europe. But, after the tightrope walking of the General's statement on China last week, few are hardy enough to venture a prediction. Even Vandenberg was ambiguous on that part of our policy in his Cleveland speech. It may be significant that circles reflecting the opinions of pro-Soviet John Carter Vincent, of State's Far Eastern Division, seem to welcome the appointment. On the other hand, spokesmen for the Joint Chiefs of Staff express -- or is it profess? -- approval. All in all, prudent observers are inclined to withhold definite comment. For weeks to come, uncertainty about Marshall's course may reign.

As to the propriety of the choice, it was not so much the appointment of a military man that gave us an uneasy feeling as it was the immediate, automatic unthinking acceptance of a General by people and Congress, without qualification or aware-

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ness of the implications. As at the opening bar of "Oh, say can you see," everyone dutifully stood up. Was this a survival of the goose-stepping spirit of wartime? To some, this public acquiescence demonstrates an apathy toward American traditions and an insensibility to world opinion, at a time when we prate about our global responsibilities.

There has not been a military man in this essentially civilian position for 90 years, since the appointment of Gen. Lewis Cass under Buchanan. The time seems inappropriate to break with this tradition; and the tendency to name Generals to important diplomatic posts is disturbing. It is ironical to recall that people have talked -- perhaps idly -- of the State Department as the "Department of Peace," and yet people now think that to name a professional soldier to head it is quite all right. Foreign capitals will hardly give us the benefit of the doubt when weighing the motives behind this situation.

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When Henry Wallace accused his own Government of imperialistic aims in seeking bases on Iceland last year, many thought he had a point. Now, it appears, the United States claim was modest compared with the actions of the Soviet Government in the Arctic area. In 1944, it is now officially disclosed, Molotov demanded of Norway (possessor of the territory) joint sovereignty over the Spitzbergen archipelago and outright cession of Bear Island, one of that group. That was one year before the State Department first formally sought air bases in Iceland, proposing that the air and naval facilities would be made available to the UN, if Iceland became a member. That country was admitted last month. Russia, in its proposal, made no provision for UN rights.

Russia, when it heard of our proposal to Iceland, pretended to be shocked and "threatened" to seek the rights in Spitzbergen which they had already asked for in 1944. We withdrew our request for the Iceland base. Now, it turns out that Russia is still pressing Norway for rights in this strategic archipelago which is about 3,500 flying miles from Pennsylvania. The State Department has expressed its concern over Russian intentions.

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The real driving power behind the fight against continuance of the War Investigating Committee is a combination of various interests which fear the disclosure of the true picture of our regime in Germany. They include those who want to protect the "fair name" of the Army, the old Morgenthau crowd, pro-Communists and newspapers with a bad record of deceiving the public. All these have seized upon the Congressional Reorganization Act as a weapon to attack their target, arguing that the survival of the War Investigating Committee violates the La Follette-Monroney measure.

It is true that the famous "streamlining Congress" reform originally contemplated elimination of special committees. But last summer, as Senator Taft forcefully points out, Congress specifically exempted any current special committees and permitted them to be continued. Obviously there are occasions in which the magnitude of an issue demands a special ad hoc committee of investigation. The mystery of our German policy, if any, is a case in point.

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The Wandering Jew knows how to wander right out of Red Utopia. Just after reading of the glories of the Jewish Autonomous Republic of Biro-Bidjan, USSR, in one of the "let's understand Russia" sheets, we ran into an American official from occupied Germany. He told of the arrival in Bavaria of a number of Jews from Biro-Bidjan, which is some 5,000 miles to the east, on the edge of Manchuria. Some of the Jews still surviving in that bleak area had heard of the relatively good food and lodging in the American zone in Germany. They trekked clear across the

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Eurasian land-mass, deceiving NKVD guards with the story that they were Polish Jews returning to the new "democratic" Poland. When they reached Poland, the Jewish underground smuggled them across the lines to our occupation zone. One of the Jews came from a place 1,500 miles beyond Biro-Bidjan -- from Vladivostok. He, and the others, seemed to like it better in Bavaria.

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As ancient, as monotonous, but still as compelling as the cry of the perennial ragged figure at the church door was the personal appeal of Premier de Gasperi of Italy on his arrival here. The alms he seeks are an assured supply of bread and coal. "Two days" was the answer to our query as to how long Italy could hold out if these supplies from abroad ceased -- two days for the cities and two weeks for the country districts. He laid particular stress on the need for coal. Without such fuel, not only will factories stop, but the trains bringing food will not run. "Every day's delay in food and coal shipments from America means a riot in some Italian city," he said, as he emphasized the serious blows which the American coal and maritime strikes had dealt his country.

The Italian Premier promised Italian goods in payment for this help. But, our best reward -- if we learn the lesson -- might well be something else he told us. He spoke of an ominous developing pattern in Italian politics: the extreme Right and extreme Left seem to be making a deal as against the Center, of which de Gasperi is the head. On the Right is the Common Man (L'Uomo Qualunque) Party, not as yet Fascist -- says the Italian Premier -- but numbering former leading Fascists among its members; on the Left, the Communist Party, also with former prominent Fascists in its ranks; and in the middle, the Christian Democrats, free of any such figures, and thoroughly democratic.

Now, reveals de Gasperi, during the past fortnight important talks have taken place between the Communist boss Togliatti and the head of L'Uomo Qualunque, Giannini; and it is feared that the two may act together. It is recalled that Communist and Nazi elements collaborated in the 1932 disorders in Germany which were followed by the victory of Hitler. Lest we forget -- extremes of Right and Left defeated several real liberals in United States primary elections last summer.

Two days after the de Gasperi interview, press photos reproduced his happy face clutching a Treasury check for $50,000,000. The gentle German Centrist, Bruening, would have been grateful for as much in 1932 as he stood between Brown and Red Fascism. Yet, it may be questioned whether dollar credits can do Italy much good, if American production and shipments lag.

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The resignation of John B. Hutson, American Assistant Secretary General of the UN, inspires some sour reflections. The fact that he has left the UN is all on the credit side. Appointed by Byrnes last spring from his post in the Department of Agriculture, as a diplomat he starred as an agronomist. We reported in this column (May 29, 1946) how Hutson invited the bitterly anti-Soviet Polish General, Bor-Komorowski, to luncheon with Soviet representatives, thereby provoking a two-day uproar among the outraged Russians. Today, discreet murmurs creep out as to Hutson's "competency" for his UN job.

One cannot be too careful about naming an amateur to an international body. It is reprehensible enough to send an ignoramus to represent us as Ambassador to a foreign capital, just because he made a campaign contribution. But that reflects on our prestige as a nation. If we staff UN with misfits, that reflects on the body itself, for which we profess so much esteem. If this kind of appointment recurs, it will confirm those who have grave doubts that the United States has the savoir-faire to exercise intelligent leadership in international organization.

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Notes and Quotes

American writers have given little critical examination to the British Labor Government's social and economic planning. Too many have seen it through glasses, "pink-tinted" by the Laski influence, or distorted by a desire to say nothing critical of England in the difficult reconstruction effort. But Mr. John Chamberlain, in the Yale Review (Winter 1947), has written an outspoken article "Britain Under Planning," which reports some not-so-promising results of Fabian Socialism.

Chamberlain points out that the Government revival of the "depressed areas" carries with it higher costs for industry which "imposes a net drag on England's recovery." And "the planning that still subordinates most creative effort in Britain to the necessities of rationing, of allocations, of price-and-profit controls, of strict monetary and tax management, does have its effect on the springs of individual action" which has brought a "mild case of neurasthenia" with an "almost imperceptible reluctance . . . to tackling the day's work with enthusiasm."

"The fairness of the rationing system is purchased at a price in human energy," and the "incredibly numerous acts of form-filling and coupon cutting, sorting, marking, and counting take time, some of which might otherwise be spent in productive labor." The failure of the housing program is illustrated by an anecdote: "For six months, Mr. Eldridge went about trying to find a contractor to repair a house for which he collected the rent. There was no contractor who had both the necessary labor or the necessary materials. One day Mr. Eldridge was summoned before the magistrate for failing to comply with the Borough Council's notice to repair his roof and gutters. When the court threatened to have the work done for Mr. Eldridge and charged against him, the astonished culprit said, 'That's just what I have been wanting for the past six months.'"

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On a wall of the Feldherrnhalle in Munich somebody scrawled the following: "Buchenwald, Belsen, Auschwitz -- I am ashamed of being a German." But someone else came along and wrote beneath it: "Goethe, Beethoven, Schopenhauer -- I am proud to be a German."

* * * * *

In the Press Club Bar. 1st Reporter: "I hear Bilbo isn't as sick as they claimed -- and meanwhile he's drawing pay." 2nd Reporter: "Oh, God! I thought we were through with that story. It was a fake." 3rd Reporter: "Sure was. Senator X told me before Congress assembled that the Republican caucus wasn't sure they would challenge Bilbo at the door. They were afraid he'd grab the headlines, instead of the Republicans. You know, a nice dignified swearing in of the GOP Senate." 1st Reporter: "Yes, they finally decided on the fracas because they want more votes in Harlem."

2nd Reporter: "Had some fun kidding the bleeding hearts who wanted him ousted. Told them Bilbo had as good a liberal record on at least one question as any of their liberal heroes -- he always voted for Federal aid to education."
1st Reporter: "Remember? The Nation once thought Rankin a great liberal -- before he started talking racialism -- because he came out for TVA." All: "To hell with bleeding hearts."

1st Reporter: "I bet that if they repealed the poll tax as the liberals want, all the poor whites down there would vote for Talmadge, Bilbo, Rankin and bigger and better white supremacy." 2nd Reporter: "I bet Bilbo is never definitely barred." 3rd Reporter: "I bet the Republicans don't want him barred -- he's too useful as a whipping boy." All: "Waiter! Three Virginia Gentleman and soda."

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